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## IHAA Code of Equine Welfare

Promoting good horse welfare is a priority of the IHAA. We require all those involved in IHAA events to adhere to the IHAA Code of Equine Welfare and to acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount.

**Welfare of the horse must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.**

Sections 1 and 2 contain general welfare expectations that the IHAA wishes to promote for all times; at home and at competition. Sections 3-7 contain stipulations that must be adhered to in IHAA sanctioned competitions (Record & Ranking or Accredited). Some are reproduced in the Rulebook, others are specified only in this document, however they serve as a supplement to the rules with the same force.

### 1. General Welfare

- a. **Good horse management:** Stabling/turnout and feeding must be compatible with the best horse management practices. Clean and good quality hay (or other forage) and fresh water must be available. Horses should have appropriate condition for their age and breed, and attention should be given that they are neither underweight nor overweight (see [here](#) for a general guide). Horses should have regular dental checks and necessary treatment.
- b. **Training methods:** Horses must only undergo training that matches their physical capabilities and level of maturity (physical and mental) for their respective level of horse archery activities. They must not be subjected to methods which are abusive or cause fear.
- c. **Fariery:** Foot care and, where applicable, shoeing must be of a high standard and appropriate for the type of terrain and weather conditions.

### 2. Transport

- a. During transportation, horses must be fully protected against injuries and other health risks. Vehicles must be safe, well ventilated, maintained to a high standard, disinfected regularly and driven by competent personnel. Competent handlers must always be available to manage the horses.
- b. All journeys must be planned carefully, and horses allowed regular rest periods with access to food and water.

### 3. Archery equipment

- a. Horses must be properly desensitised, while mounted, to the use of all archery equipment that will be used in the event (e.g. bow, arrows, quiver, targets of every type to be used, bowcases if necessary etc.) and flags if they will be used in the opening ceremony
- b. Quivers must be of safe design and must not, either in their design or manner of wearing, cause pain or fear. Arrow tips must not be exposed (except in the case of historical type quivers where the tips are pointing upwards and visible but are still technically inside the quiver). Method of loading must not be dangerous for the horse (e.g. arrows points being very close to the head, etc.). Neither quiver nor arrows should incidentally cause undesired aids for the horse, but it needs to be recognised that this relies both on 1) reasonable construction of the equipment as well as 2) proper desensitisation of the horse to incidental contact between quiver and horse which may happen in certain circumstances regardless of the quiver construction. If a horse is not desensitised to moderate incidental contact between the quiver and its body, this represents more of a horse training issue rather than a horse welfare one.

### 4. Tack

- a. Tack must be designed and fitted properly to avoid the risk of pain or injury. This includes all aspects of saddles (tree, girthing system, pads, etc.) and other gear (bridles, including bit and curb chain, if applicable). Presentation of mouth lesions (when the horse cannot be ridden bitless) or girth sores disqualify a horse from being used in a competition.
- b. There are no restrictions on the type of saddle used. However a competitor may not use his own saddle on a hired horse without the permission of the owner and (where there is provision for this) the approval of a saddler. Horses may only be ridden bareback or using a saddle/pad without stirrups with the permission of the Head Judge and the horse's owner [see IHA Rulebook: G&C #3.11].
- c. **Horses must have a free head carriage.** [See IHA Rulebook: G&C #3.9]  
This means that a horse's head should be free for its natural carriage in its gait. There should be NO tension on the reins to the horse's mouth, nose or head whilst they are released for shooting. Any device or arrangement that pulls (in any plane) on the horse's head or mouth, when being ridden at normal paces with the reins released, is not permitted (whether used with the aim of slowing the horse or not). Examples include (but are not limited to) bearing, side, draw, running, balancing reins, training fork or similar. Devices such as the Market Harborough (German martingale), de Gogue and standing martingale / tie-down may not be used. If anyone comes to a track with such a device, they will be asked to change it to appropriate tack and will not be permitted to compete until they do.

- d. It is permitted to knot the reins and fix the reins to the saddle via a cord, rein keep, clip, other quick release, or looped over (but not tightly fixed to) the pommel/horn as a safety measure and to allow quick retrieval. However the reins may not be knotted and fixed to the saddle so tightly that they restrict the horse's head and act to slow the horse.
- e. The use of martingales is discouraged. In competition, use of a standing martingale (also known as fixed martingale or tie-down) is forbidden. A running martingale may be used as long as it is fitted correctly and allows the horse unrestricted head movement when the reins are released.  
*See Appendix 1 re. Defining and fitting a running martingale*

## 5. Fitness to compete

- a. **Fitness and competence:** Participation in competition must be restricted to fit horses and competitors of proven competence. Horses must be allowed suitable rest periods between training and competitions as well as between starts (whether involving different tracks or different riders); additional rest periods should be allowed following travelling.
- b. **Horse allocation:** It is the responsibility for the organiser to allocate horses appropriate to the ability, riding style, weight, height, and preference of the competitor. Normally weight born by the horse (including tack) should be no more than 20% of the horse's weight. The IHAA recognises that there are many factors which may cause weight-carrying ability to be slightly above or below this 20% recommendation. These include, but are not limited to: age, conformation, muscling, and overall fitness. For example, an older horse, or one returning from injury, should carry less weight. The onus is on the organiser and horse owner to establish a proper weight limit for each horse used in competition. Any questionable cases should be reported to the Head Judge to handle, in conjunction with the organiser, horse owner, and a qualified individual if necessary. In the event of any disputes concerning this, qualified individuals present should evaluate the overall situation of the horse in conjunction with the owner.
- c. **Workload:** The daily workload for a horse is limited to 3 starts per day for 1- or 2-day competitions, and 2 starts per day for competitions of 3+ days.  
In unpredictable situations which arise after a competition has begun (e.g. a horse withdrawn due to lameness, inclement weather, etc.), it is possible for **one** further start to be permitted by the Head Judge, with careful consideration of the fitness of the horse, the local ground and weather conditions, and the duration of the whole event. However, where possible, a number of reserve horses should be available to be used in such cases.  
A "start" is defined as the warm-up and competitive runs for one style of event, for one rider.  
Horses that are 4 or 5 years of age are limited to 2 starts in all cases, regardless of any unpredictable situations which arise. Horses under the age of 4 are not permitted to compete. All of the above applies regardless of what gait the horse competes at.  
**The horses involved in the competition are only to take part in activities directly relating to the competition—they are not to be used for any additional activities on the competition days.**

- d. **Horse owners:** Each horse owner has the right to decide the number of riders and oversee the selection process for their horse. The owner of a horse may at any time withdraw their horse from the competition for any reason.
- e. **Rider aids:** These must be without the use of fear and force, ideally using the minimum pressure necessary for the desired result. Stopping at the end of the track must be done using as soft aids as possible - use of excessive force on the reins can and will result in warnings from the judge. Within the competition setting, there are strict rules regarding the use of spurs and other artificial aids. Abuse (i.e. excessive duration or intensity of aids, including overhand use of a whip or arrow) of a horse using natural riding aids or artificial aids (e.g. whips, spurs, etc.) will not be tolerated. If a judge considers the type of spurs to be inappropriate for a rider's ability or their use to be harsh the judge can request, then demand (if there are ongoing concerns), that a rider removes the spurs and can disqualify the rider if in contravention of [G&C] #13.2 or #13.2.1 (the blood rule), which reads: *Evidence of bleeding on a horse's flank(s), in its mouth or nose, or marks indicating excessive use of spurs or whipping will result in immediate elimination of the rider from the whole competition.* In addition, the use of archery equipment as an aid (e.g. an arrow as a crop/whip) is discouraged and a judge will issue a warning for a competitor to stop if the use is considered excessive in force (e.g. overhand use) or inappropriate in another way. These rules will be strictly enforced by the judges.
- f. **Health status:** No horse deemed unfit to compete may compete or continue to compete, and equine veterinary advice must be sought whenever there is any doubt. Each competition organiser must have a process in place for competent individuals to check all the horses before the competition begins for soundness and appropriate level of physical and mental health to participate in the competition, including but not limited to: weight & condition, fitness, injury or lameness.
- g. **Doping and Medication:** Any action or intent of doping and illicit use of medication constitutes a serious welfare issue and will not be tolerated (refer to IHAA Rulebook G&C #19). After any veterinary treatment, sufficient time must be allowed for full recovery before competition.
- h. **Pregnant/recently foaled mares:** Mares must not compete after their fourth month of pregnancy or with foal at foot (i.e. until mares and foals have been completely separated).

## 6. Horse care and veterinary provision

- a. **Veterinary treatment:** Equine veterinary expertise must always be readily available at an event. At minimum, this means an equine veterinary practice must be easily reachable, so a professional can call out to the event on short notice. If a horse is injured or exhausted during a competition, the athlete must stop competing and an evaluation by a qualified person (not necessarily a vet, unless the type or extent of issue merits a vet's expertise) must be performed.
- b. **Referral centres:** Wherever deemed necessary, a veterinary professional should evaluate the horse or the horse should be transported to the nearest relevant treatment centre for further assessment and therapy. Injured horses must be given full supportive treatment before being transported.
- c. **Competition injuries:** The incidence of injuries sustained in competition must be monitored and recorded. The IHA requires an Incident form to be completed online for every accident or near miss involving a human or horse at a R&R competition. Ground surface conditions, frequency of competitions and any other risk factors can be examined carefully to indicate ways to minimise injuries.
- d. **Euthanasia:** If injuries are sufficiently severe a horse may need to be euthanised on humane grounds by a veterinarian as soon as possible, with the sole aim of minimising suffering.

## 7. Welfare responsibilities of an event organiser

- a. **Competition areas:** Horses must be trained and compete on suitable and appropriate surfaces for the type of styles held. All barriers, obstacles, footing and competition conditions must be designed with the safety of the horse in mind.
- b. **Ground surfaces:** All ground surfaces on which horses walk, train or compete must be designed and maintained to reduce factors that could lead to injury.
- c. **Extreme weather:** Competitions must not take place in extreme weather conditions that may compromise the welfare or safety of horses. Provision must be made for cooling or drying areas and/or equipment for horses after competing, as appropriate for the weather conditions.
- d. **Stabling at events:** Stables/paddocks must be safe, hygienic, comfortable, well ventilated and of sufficient size for the type and disposition of the horse. Provision for washing horses and water must always be available. **Between starts/groups, competitors must take their horses back to the stable/paddocks where food and water is available, unless the horse has access to readily available water (e.g. a bucket) and a sufficient amount of food (grass or haynets) at the competition area.**

Judges will uphold this Code of Equine Welfare through technical meetings, advice, formal warnings (yellow cards), disqualification of competitors (red cards) or requiring horses to be retired from competition.

The responsibility to uphold this code is upon every person associated with the horseback archery competition, whether a competitor, competitor's support team, organiser, horse owner, ground crew or judge.

It is envisaged that welfare issues will normally be resolved at the lower levels and should not need to be escalated to a judge's authority.

**Education:** The IHA urges all those involved in horseback archery to attain the highest possible levels of education in areas of expertise relevant to the care and management of the competition horse.

**Review period:**

This Code of Equine Welfare will be reviewed at least every 2 years and may be modified, and the views of all are welcomed. Particular attention will be paid to new research findings.

**Appendix 1 - Defining and fitting a running martingale**

- Attached to the rein via sliding rings (not attached to the bit)
- Runs via an integral breastplate or is attached to a separate breastplate (ie. it is not attached directly to the girth without an intermediate attachment )
- Fitting: the martingale should be adjusted so that the sliding rings reach the throatlash.  
When the horse's head carriage is in a neutral position and the rider's hands are by the withers, the fitting of the martingale MUST allow the reins to be straight. In preference there would be some laxity in the martingale straps as shown in the photo.
- A correctly fitted running martingale has no action when the reins are dropped and allows full extension of the head on the neutral horizontal plane.  
It does have an effect when the reins are picked up again if the horse exhibits a raised head carriage.

